



October 16, 2013

To: Medicaid Innovation and Reform Commission

From: Tegwyn Brickhouse, DDS, PhD; Chair, Virginia Oral Health Coalition  
Sarah Bedard Holland; Executive Director, Virginia Oral Health Coalition

Re: **Comments regarding the need for Medicaid Expansion**

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**Board of Directors**

Tegwyn Brickhouse, DDS, PhD, *Chair*  
VCU School of Dentistry

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CHIP of Roanoke Valley

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On behalf of the board of directors, staff and partners of The Virginia Oral Health Coalition (Coalition) we are pleased to offer comments on the work of the Medicaid Innovation and Reform Commission (MIRC) and the need to expand Medicaid. The Coalition is an alliance of individuals and organizations committed to bringing excellent oral health to all Virginians through policy change, public awareness and innovative new programs.

The Coalition supported the compromise budget language approved during the 2013 General Assembly Session and agreed upon by the Governor, and looks forward to working with the MIRC as it proceeds. While we recognize there is much to be done to ensure Virginia's uninsured have access to lifesaving health care in an efficient and effective manner, the Coalition and our partners support expansion of eligibility for Medicaid as outlined in the Affordable Care Act.

A recent study by PEW Center on the States found preventable dental conditions were the primary reason for 830,590 emergency department visits in this country<sup>1</sup>.

One Virginia hospital reports 4.5 individuals a day are seen in the emergency department for dental issues; a trend that continues statewide<sup>2</sup>. Dental disease is associated with myriad chronic diseases including diabetes and heart disease. While the dental benefit available for individuals enrolled in Medicaid is quite limited, if expanded:

- **420,000 uninsured Virginians will have access to emergency dental extractions, reducing the number of life-threatening infections and minimizing use of the emergency department for dental issues.**

We appreciate your willingness to discuss this issue and urge you to support expansion of Medicaid. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us. We look forward to continuing the dialogue.

Sincerely,

Tegwyn Brickhouse, DDS, PhD  
Chair, Virginia Oral Health Coalition

Sarah Bedard Holland  
Executive Director, Virginia Oral Health Coalition

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<sup>1</sup> The Pew Center on the States. (2012, February 28). *A Costly Dental Destination*. Retrieved from <http://www.pewstates.org/research/reports/a-costly-dental-destination-85899379755>.

<sup>2</sup> Neary, M. (2013, October 11). Dental coverage takes shape in Affordable Care Act. *The News Leader*. Retrieved October 15, 2013, from <http://www.newsleader.com/article/20131011/NEWS01/310080035/Dental-coverage-takes-shape-Affordable-Care-Act>